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ABSTRACT

As part of a telephone survey conducted during 1980 by the Coast Community College District, district residents were asked to rate the importance of seven community college missions for them personally and for the people of Orange County. The seven missions rated were occupational training, transfer education, general education, basic skills training, lifelong learning, cultural and recreational programs, and supportive services. The majority of the respondents gave very positive ratings to all of the seven missions and most tended to place more value on the missions when considering them in terms of the needs of other people than in terms of their own perspectives. Lifelong learning and occupational training received high levels of support from the community on both the personal and social dimensions. A comparison of the attitudes of district residents with those of a statewide cross-section of California residents regarding the same seven missions revealed nearly identical rank orders and that the district residents tended to rate all seven missions at higher levels of importance than the statewide sample. The three-part study report examines: (1) the personal and social attitudes of the district respondents toward the missions; (2) the findings of the district and statewide surveys; and (3) the attitudes of district residents broken down by demographic characteristics, including age, sex, ethnicity, income, and residence, educational, and family characteristics. (KL)

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COAST COMMUNITY COLLEGES
Community Telephone Survey
1980

PURPOSES AND PRIORITIES

An analysis of community attitudes towards the missions of the community college.

Dennis G. Butler
Associate Dean, District Research

JC 820 204

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The Coast Community Colleges, 1370 Adams Avenue, Costa Mesa, CA 92626

This is the fifth in a series of eight reports based on findings from the 1980 Community Telephone Survey. The focus of this report is on measuring the value placed on the various community college missions by the residents of the District.

The relationships displayed in this report are primarily those which emerged from the data analysis as being statistically significant. As with other reports from this series, the information presented in this document is intended to serve a wide audience. The data are presented in simplified tables or graphs using whole percentages.

Dennis G. Butler
Coast Community College District
May, 1981

The District wishes to commend the fine efforts of Dr. Dennis G. Butler in guiding the telephone survey through its design, implementation, analysis, and in providing a format which makes the publication highly useable to a diverse auidence. As of publication, Dr. Butler is no longer with the Office of Vocational Education and Educational Planning but is teaching at Orange Coast College. Readers who are interested in more detailed statistical factors or analyses which may not be presented in the published report are invited to contact Dr. Butler at Orange Coast College or the District Office of Vocational Education and Educational Planning at 1370 Adams Avenue, Costa Mesa, California 92626, (714) 556-5528.

Donald F. Averill
Coast Community College District
December, 1981

INTRODUCTION

One of the major strengths of the community college is derived from the diversity of its missions. The community college is charged with performing a unique variety of functions, the combination of which enables the college to serve the individual educational needs of the diverse adult population residing in its service area. While there is considerable individual and social value in the combination of community college missions as they are presently structured, community colleges, especially those in California, are currently faced with a growing tension between community college missions and the realities of declining financial support for the public enterprise.

Many legislators and other state-level decision makers, motivated by an atmosphere of fiscal stringency, are calling the community college missions into question or asking that they at least be re-examined. The current political mood seems to reflect the notion that simply because an activity has value, that is not necessarily sufficient justification for support with public funds. Ultimately, it will be the public who will decide, based on the value which they attribute to the various community college missions, which of those missions warrant public support.

One important objective of the 1980 Community Telephone Survey was to obtain a measure of the value placed on

the various community college missions by the residents of the Coast Community College District. This information was obtained through the use of seven statements which describe the missions of California's community colleges. For each statement the survey respondents were asked to indicate whether they felt that particular function was "very important," "somewhat important," "not too important," or "not important at all." The seven mission statements, listed below, were the same as those used in a statewide survey of California residents conducted about seven months prior to the Coast District survey. Using the same statements and the same rating scale as used in the statewide survey enabled us to develop comparisons between the attitudes of people living in the Coast District and those of a cross-section of Californians relative to the following community college missions:

Occupational Training
"Providing instruction or training which enables people to acquire skills for a new job, to move up in their present job, or to train for another career."

Transfer Education
"Providing academic instruction for students who plan to transfer to a four-year college or university."

General Education
"Providing general education so students can develop an understanding of themselves, of others, and of their general environment."

Basic Skills
"Helping students improve their basic skills, such as reading, writing, and mathematics so they can continue their education."

Life-long Learning
"Providing all people in the community with an opportunity to continue their education on a life-long basis."

Cultural & Recreational
"Providing the community with cultural or recreational programs or special interest lectures."

Supportive Services
"Providing students and people in the community with supportive services such as counseling and job placement."

Another feature of the 1980 Community Telephone Survey which distinguishes it from other surveys of its type was the attempt to obtain both personal and social attitudes of the respondents relative to the seven community college missions described above. Most previous studies asking for value judgements about college missions or functions have typically asked "how important do you think this is?" and recorded the response on whatever scale was being used. The problem with this approach is that it leaves the researcher not knowing if the respondent has answered in terms of his or her immediate personal needs or if the answer reflects what the respondent felt was important for people in general. The literature of psychology and the social sciences tells us that some people are oriented toward "self" and tend to make value judgments on the basis of personal impact or preference. At the opposite end of the spectrum are those people who are "other" oriented and tend to make value judgments based on what they feel benefits the majority of people, disregarding their personal preferences. When respondents are randomly selected for a survey there is no way of knowing where on this "self-other"

spectrum they lie. Thus, there is no way of knowing the perspective from which they respond to a value judgment question.

In order to learn more about this phenomenon, the 1980 Community Telephone Survey was designed to elicit responses from both the personal perspective and the social perspective. For each of the seven community college missions statements the respondents were asked how important that function was to them, personally, and how important they felt it was for the people of Orange County. For each of the seven items, both responses were recorded on the four-point importance scale described above. This provided data which allowed us to determine whether or not people differentiated between the personal and social perspectives when making value judgments; and, given the two perspectives, how those value judgments differed.

The first part of this report presents a comparison of the personal attitudes and the social attitudes of the residents of the Coast Community College District towards the seven community college missions that were described to them during the survey. The second part of this report is a comparison of the attitudes of residents of the Coast District with those of a statewide cross-section of California residents on the same seven community college missions. The third part of this report displays differences in the attitudes of Coast District residents based on demographic characteristics. As with other information from the 1980 Community Telephone Survey, those readers interested in detailed statistical factors or more precise data are invited to contact the District Research Office.

PERSONAL PRIORITIES AND SOCIAL PRIORITIES

The findings from the Community Telephone Survey suggest that people do indeed have more than one perspective on the importance of community college missions and that, depending on whether the value judgment is one of personal importance or social importance, the two perspectives do differ. A series of statistical tests performed on the survey data revealed that there were significant differences between the personal importance ratings and the social importance ratings for each of the seven missions and that, in some cases, there was very little correlation between the two. Additional tests revealed that there were statistically significant differences in the importance of the individual missions, relative to one another, between the personal dimension and the social dimension.

The first seven tables in this report display both personal importance and social importance ratings, expressed in percentages, for each of the seven mission areas. In viewing these tables, two observations are immediately obvious. The first is that the majority of respondents gave very positive ratings to all of the seven missions. The second observation is that the respondents tended to place more importance on the missions when considering them in terms of the needs of other people than they did when considering the missions in terms of their own personal perspectives. The reader may also notice that there are differences in the importance ratings of the individual missions and that the differences between the personal ratings and social ratings also vary from mission to mission.

Table 1
Importance Ratings for Vocational Training

	Percent	
Rating	**Personal**	**Social**
Very Important	71%	88%
Somewhat Important	13	10
Not Too Important	9	1
Not Important At All	7	1

Table 2
Importance Ratings for Transfer Education

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	68%	86%
Somewhat Important	10	11
Not Too Important	10	2
Not Important At All	12	1

Table 3
Importance Ratings for General Education

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	67%	75%
Somewhat Important	19	17
Not Too Important	8	5
Not Important At All	6	3

Table 4
Importance Ratings for Basic Skills

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	67%	81%
Somewhat Important	11	12
Not Too Important	12	5
Not Important At All	10	2

Table 5
Importance Ratings for Life-Long Learning

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	76%	81%
Somewhat Important	14	14
Not Too Important	5	3
Not Important At All	5	2

Table 6
Importance Ratings for Cultural & Recreational

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	59%	66%
Somewhat Important	27	27
Not Too Important	9	5
Not Important At All	5	2

Table 7
Importance Ratings for Supportive Services

	Percent	
Rating	Personal	Social
Very Important	61%	75%
Somewhat Important	18	17
Not Too Important	11	5
Not Important At All	10	3

While the absolute distributions of the importance ratings as displayed in Tables 1 through 7 are both encouraging and informative, they do not clearly show the respondents' judgments of the relative importance of the individual mission areas. That is, the question of which of the missions are perceived as being more important than the others. This kind of priority information is most easily obtained by calculating a weighted-average rating for each of the missions and using those weighted-average or mean ratings to rank-order the missions.

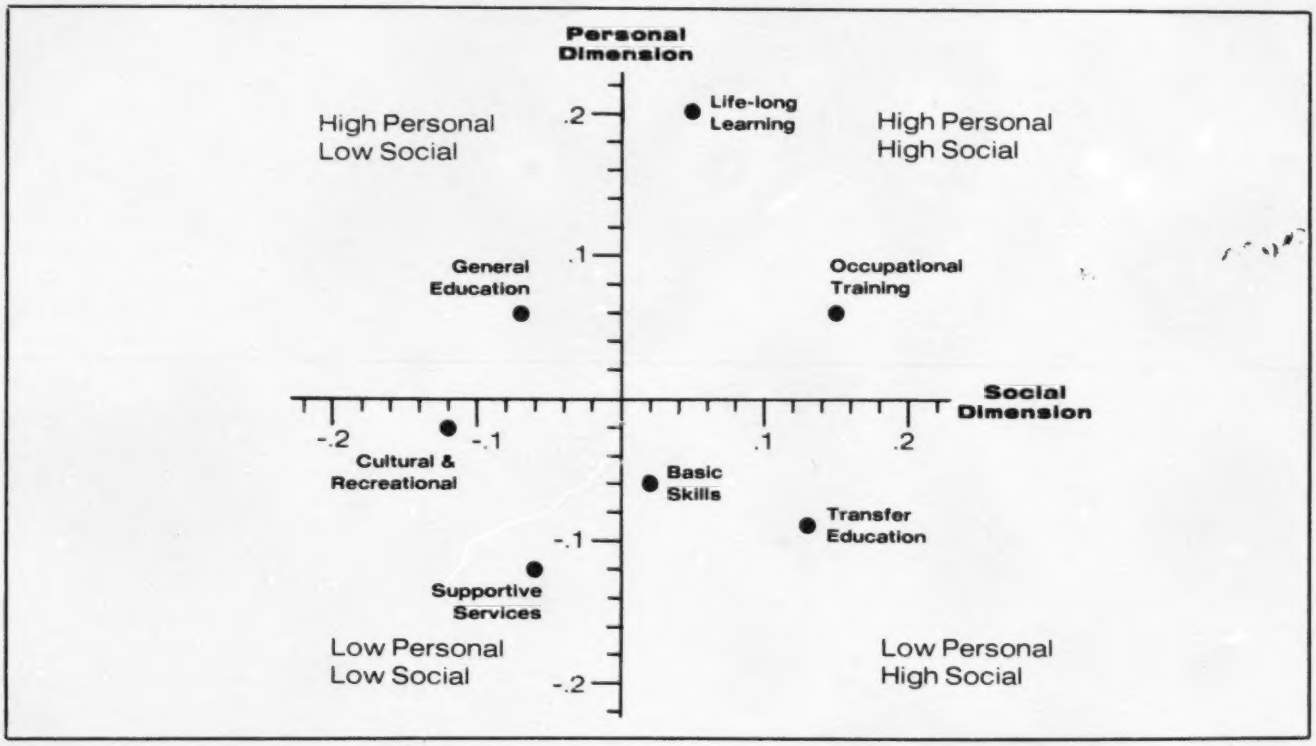
Table 8 shows the rank-order of the seven missions on both the personal and social dimensions. The weighted-mean ratings were calculated using the following weights: "Very Important" = 4, "Somewhat Important" = 3, "Not Too Important" = 2, "Not Important At All" = 1. It should be noted that on this type of rating scale, with over five hundred respondents, differences of 0.2 or greater between mean scores represent substantive differences of opinion.

The information from Table 8 demonstrates that there are substantive differences in people's social attitudes versus their personal perspectives. Life-long Learning was the most important mission on the personal dimension, but moved to third place on the social dimension. Vocational Training occupied places of high importance on both perspectives. General Education went from second place in terms of personal preference down to sixth place on the social dimension. Conversely, Transfer Education rose from sixth place on the personal dimension to second place on the social dimension. The Cultural & Recreational mission also made a substantial shift from fourth in terms of personal importance to the bottom position in terms of social importance. These differences in order of importance indicate that the relative value that people attribute to a particular community college mission depends on whether they are considering their own personal needs or the broader needs of society.

Table 8
Order of Importance of Missions by Personal and Social Perspectives

	Personal		Social	
Rank Order	Mean Rating	Mission	Mean Rating	Mission
1	3.62	Life-long Learning	3.85	Occupational Training
2	3.48	Occupational Training General Education	3.83	Transfer Education
3	— —	— ——— —	3.75	Life-long Learning
4	3.40	Cultural & Recreational	3.72	Basic Skills
5	3.36	Basic Skills	3.64	Supportive Services
6	3.33	Transfer Education	3.63	General Education
7	3.30	Supportive Services	3.58	Cultural & Recreational

Figure 1
Relative Importance of Community College Missions
Combined Social and Personal Dimensions



Another way of viewing the relative differences in importance ratings for the personal dimension and the social dimension is to examine the location of the individual missions on both dimensions simultaneously. This can be done by plotting the differences between the mean ratings for the individual missions and the overall average rating for the seven missions combined. These differences, above and below the combined average rating, are used to provide a "map" of the relative importance of the individual missions. The intersection of the two scales in Figure 1 represents a point coinciding with the average ratings on both scales for the seven missions combined. Thus, we are able to view how the community values each mission relative to all the other missions.

It can be seen from Figure 1 that Life-long Learning and Occupational Training received high levels of support from the community on both the personal and the social dimensions. Life-long Learning had the highest rating on the personal dimension while Occupational Training had the strongest social support. Transfer Education was seen as having a high level of social importance, but received a low rating on the personal dimension. Basic Skills was rated low on personal importance and slightly above average on the social dimension. General Education was rated as being high in personal importance but low in social importance. Cultural & Recreational and Supportive Services were both located in the quadrant which indicates lower than average support on both the personal and social dimensions.

The information presented to this point clearly indicates that our respondents viewed the community college missions with both a personal and a social perspective; and that within those differing contexts, their opinions of the importance of the individual missions were different. Additionally, when considering both the personal perspective and the social perspective, the importance of the individual missions differed relative to one another. Thus, this study demonstrated that future survey research requiring respondents to make value judgments on the importance of college missions or functions should incorporate a design which will allow the investigator to distinguish between expressions of personal preference and perceived social value.

In addition to examining the personal and social perspectives on the importance of college missions, the Community Telephone Survey included two additional, minor experiments related to the mission statements.

Item Order of Mission Statements

One concern during the design of the survey was that the order in which the community college missions were presented to the respondents might have some influence on the importance ratings of the individual missions. In order to test this possibility, approximately 15% of the sample were given the seven mission statements in reverse order and 15% were given the mission statements in a random order. Subsequent statistical testing indicated that the order of presentation had no significant influence on the importance ratings of the individual missions.

Clarity of Mission Statements

Another concern during the design of the study was the extent to which the community college mission statements, listed in the introduction to this report, would be understandable to the majority of community residents. For each of the seven missions, a more fundamental explanatory statement was developed. The telephone interviewers were instructed to use these alternative statements whenever a respondent gave any sign of not understanding what was meant by the primary statement and to mark a special code on the interview form. Fewer than two percent of the respondents were given the alternative statements. We can conclude from this that community members, at least those residing in the Coast Community College District, were generally able to understand the statements describing the seven community college missions. Thus, the importance rating can be said to reflect the respondents' value judgments about something which they understand.

A STATEWIDE COMPARISON

Approximately seven months prior to the Coast Community Colleges telephone survey, a similar study was conducted by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office and the Field Research Corporation, using a statewide sample of respondents. In one portion of the statewide survey, respondents were asked to provide importance ratings for the same seven community college mission statements which are the subject of this report. The Coast Community College District survey deliberately used the same mission statements and the same rating scale as used in the statewide study. The purpose of this was to enable us to compare the attitudes of residents of the Coast District towards community college missions with those of a statewide sample of California residents.

By comparing the attitudes of our local community with those of the statewide population we are able to determine, first, the extent to which the statewide data are representative of our community and, secondly, those mission areas which our community views as relatively more or relatively less important than does the statewide population. This information should help us to ensure that we continue to serve the needs of our community, even though they may differ from statewide priorities.

Table 9 provides a comparison, in terms of order of importance of the seven community college missions, between the residents of the Coast District and the statewide sample. Order of importance was based on the weighted-average importance ratings for each of the missions.

Table 9
Community College Missions in Order of Importance
Comparison of Coast Sample and Statewide Sample

Rank Order	Coast Sample Personal Perspective	Coast Sample Social Perspective	Statewide Sample
1	Life-long Learning (3.62)	Occupational Training (3.85)	Occupational Training (2.83)
2	Occupational Training (3.48) General Education (3.48)	Transfer Education (3.83)	Transfer Education (2.75)
3	——— ——— ———	Life-long Learning (3.75)	Basic Skills (2.69)
4	Cultural & Recreational (3.40)	Basic Skills (3.72)	Life-long Learning (2.51)
5	Basic Skills (3.36)	Supportive Services (3.64)	General Education (2.45)
6	Transfer Education (3.33)	General Education (3.63)	Supportive Services (2.39)
7	Supportive Services (3.30)	Cultural & Recreational (3.58)	Cultural & Recreational (2.21)

Numbers in parentheses are weighted average importance ratings

One observation that is most readily apparent from Table 9 is that the rank-orders for the statewide sample and the social perspective from the Coast sample were nearly identical. The only differences were that the statewide sample placed relatively more emphasis on Basic Skills and General Education than did the Coast District residents. Another observation, one that is most gratifying, is that the residents of the Coast District rated all of the seven missions, on both the personal and social dimensions, at higher levels of importance than did the people from the statewide sample. Occupational Training was the only mission area that received a consistently high importance rating across all three groups. The Cultural & Recreational and the General Education missions are notable in that they were both rated relatively low on the statewide ranking and the Coast social importance ranking, but both received relatively high rating on the personal importance ranking. This would seem to suggest that what people see as valuable for others may not necessarily be of similar importance to themselves as individuals.

Another way of viewing the relative differences in importance ratings for the seven community college missions is to examine the patterns created when the weighted-average importance ratings are plotted against a scale. Such a comparison is provided for the "Coast-Personal," "Coast-Social," and "Statewide" ratings in Figure 2. The plots in Figure 2 are based on the weighted-average ratings rounded to one-tenth. Again, the reader is reminded that a difference of 0.2 on this scale can be considered both significant and substantive.

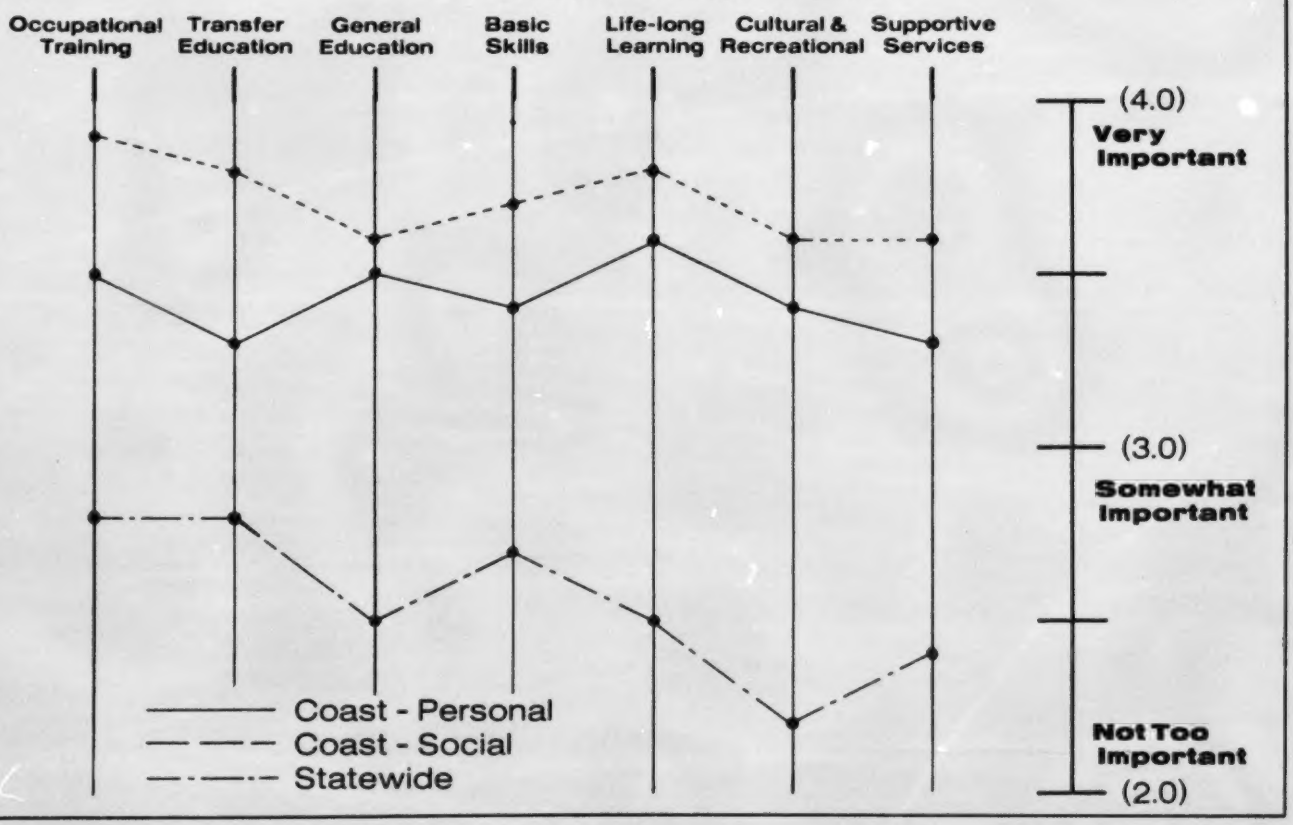
These findings suggest that there may well be substantial differences between broad statewide attitudes and those of the residents of local districts. On a more complex level, those community college functions which appeal personally to the individual residents of a district may well differ from those which they would select as having the greatest social importance.

There is a lesson from these findings that should not be lost on state-level

decision makers. Large samplings such as the statewide survey can provide a reasonable indication of the aggregate attitudes of the statewide population. However, the values of the residents of a given district may differ dramatically from those obtained from a statewide cross-section of people. Furthermore, certain college functions which may appear to have less importance in a broad social context may well prove to be those which best meet the personal needs of the greatest number of people.

Several prominent differences can be observed from this figure. The statewide sample rated Transfer Education and Occupational Training as equally important while the Coast residents tended to rate Occupational Training higher. The Coast residents, on both the personal and social perspectives, rated Life-long Learning as more important than Basic Skills while the statewide group exhibited the opposite relationship. The statewide sample rated Supportive Services as more important than Cultural & Recreational while the Coast residents did not. The pattern for Coast residents on the personal dimension differs notably from the other two patterns in that General Education was rated as more important than either Transfer Education or Basic Skills and Life-long Learning was rated as the most important of the seven missions.

Figure 2
Overall Importance of Community College Missions



IMPORTANCE RATINGS AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

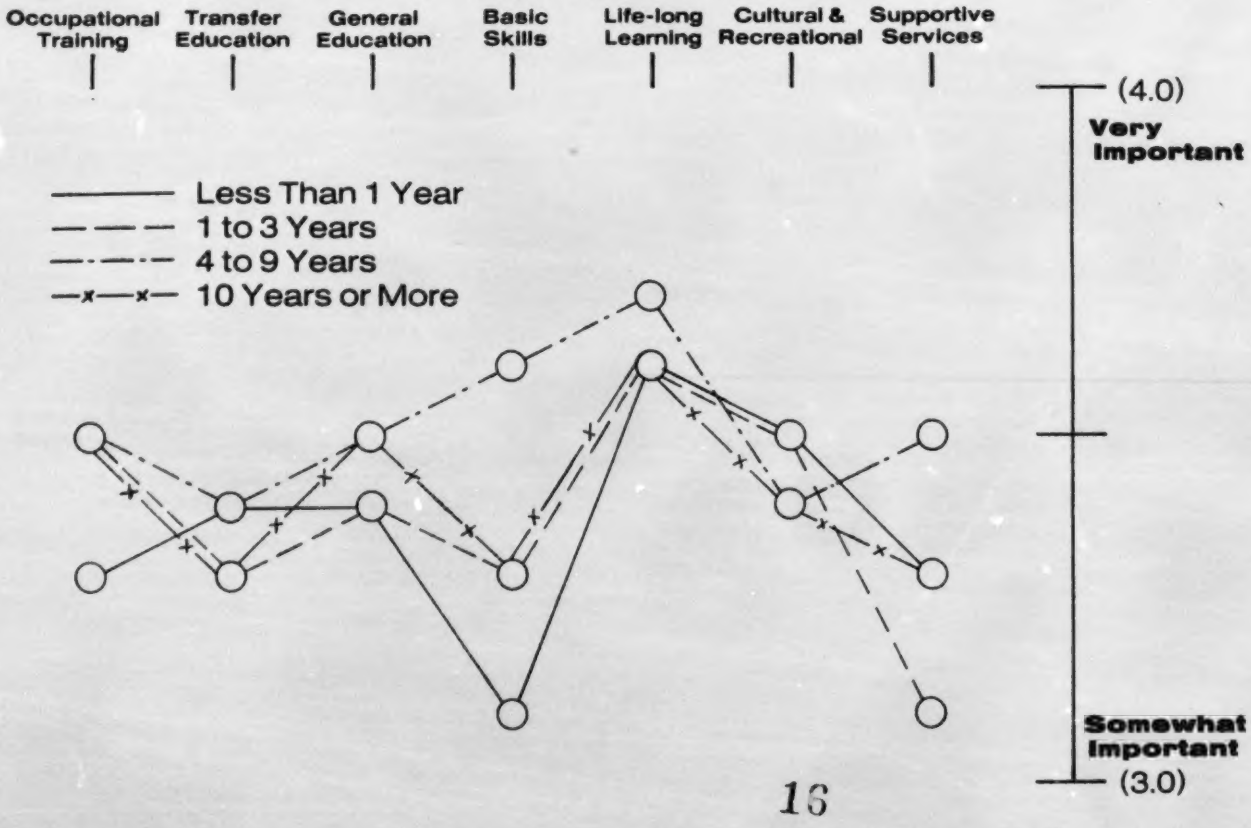
The previous material presented in this report demonstrated that the residents of the Coast District had differing views on the importance of the community college missions, depending on whether they were viewed from the perspective of their own personal needs or within a broader social context. This naturally leads to the question of whether different types of people view the various community college missions as having different levels of importance. To answer this question, the importance ratings for the community college missions were examined in relationship to the eleven demographic variables collected during the Community Telephone Survey.

On the following pages are graphic representations of the importance ratings, broken down by each of the demographic factors. These displays, similar to Figure 2 in the previous section of this report, are based on the weighted-average importance ratings from each group, rounded to the nearest tenth. In examining the rating patterns displayed in these figures, the reader can gain the most information by looking for both relative differences between groups for a given mission and relative differences between missions for one or more groups. As with Figure 2, a difference of 0.2 on the scale can be considered both significant and substantive.

Period of Residence - Personal

On the personal dimension, the very newest Orange County residents gave a lower rating for Occupational Training and a very low rating for Basic Skills. Basic Skills and Supportive Services were the areas of greatest disagreement with strongest support coming from the 4-9 year residents in both cases. There was a strong consensus on the high level of importance for Life-long Learning.

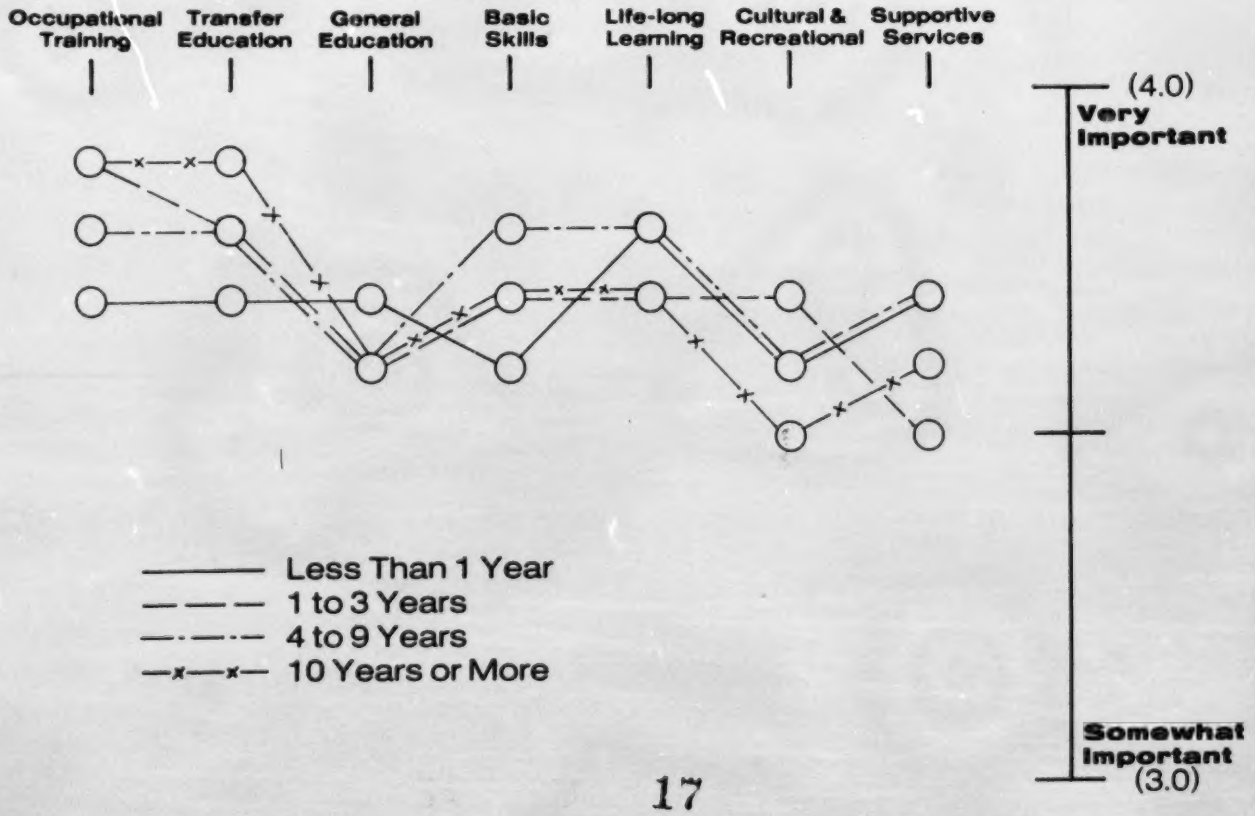
Figure 3
Period of Residence in Orange County
Personal Perspective



Period of Residence - Social

On the social dimension there was a fairly close pattern across all the resident groups, with the greatest consensus on General Education and Life-long Learning. The very newest group of residents differed from the others in that they rated Occupational Training and Transfer Education on the same level as General Education and gave a slightly lower rating for Basic Skills. The 1-3 year group differed from the others by rating Cultural & Recreational equal in importance to Life-long Learning and providing a lower rating for Supportive Services.

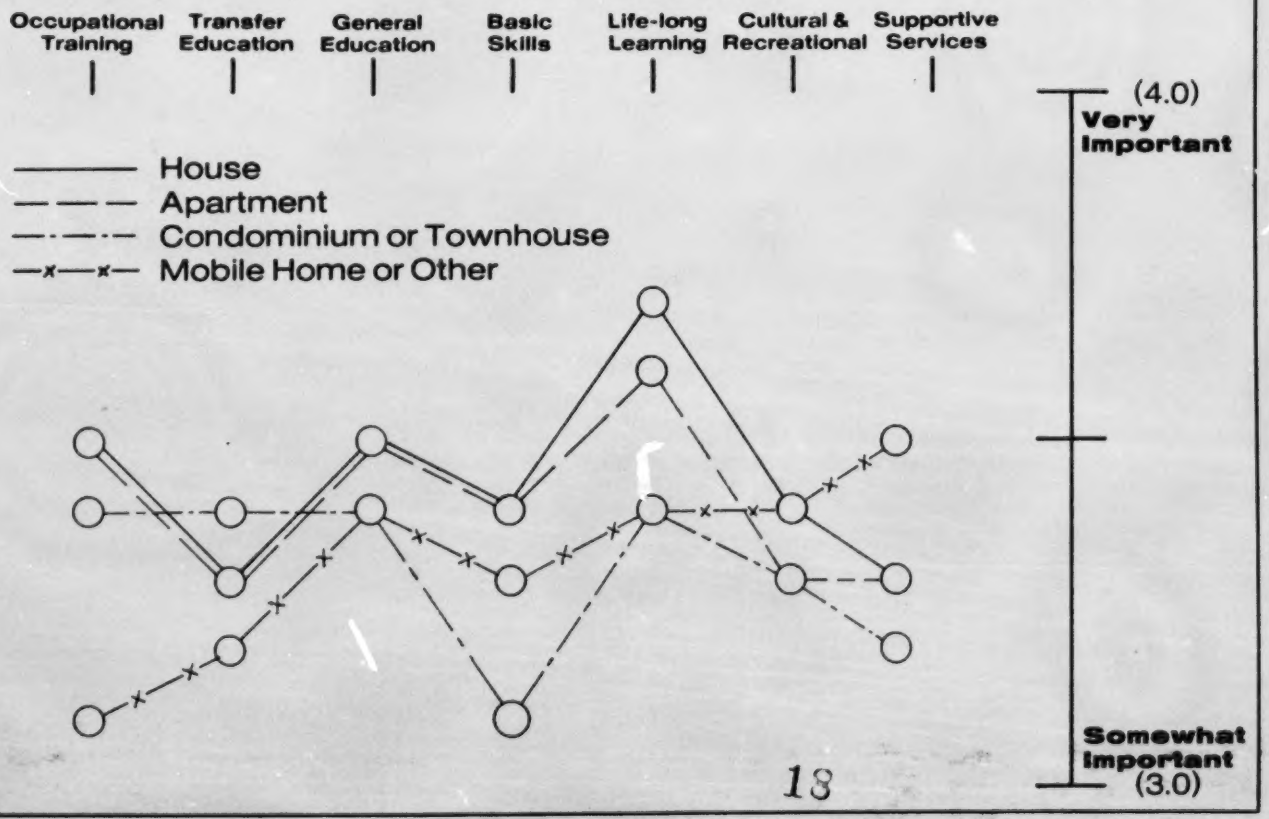
Figure 4
Period of Residence in Orange County
Social Perspective



Residence - Personal

Apartment dwellers and those living in houses were in near perfect agreement on the importance of the various missions, with Life-long Learning clearly having the highest rating. People living in condominiums or townhouses differed particularly in their lower ratings for Basic Skills and Life-long Learning. The mobile home group exhibited several marked differences including a very low rating for Occupational Training, a very high rating for Supportive Services, and a high relative rating for Cultural & Recreational.

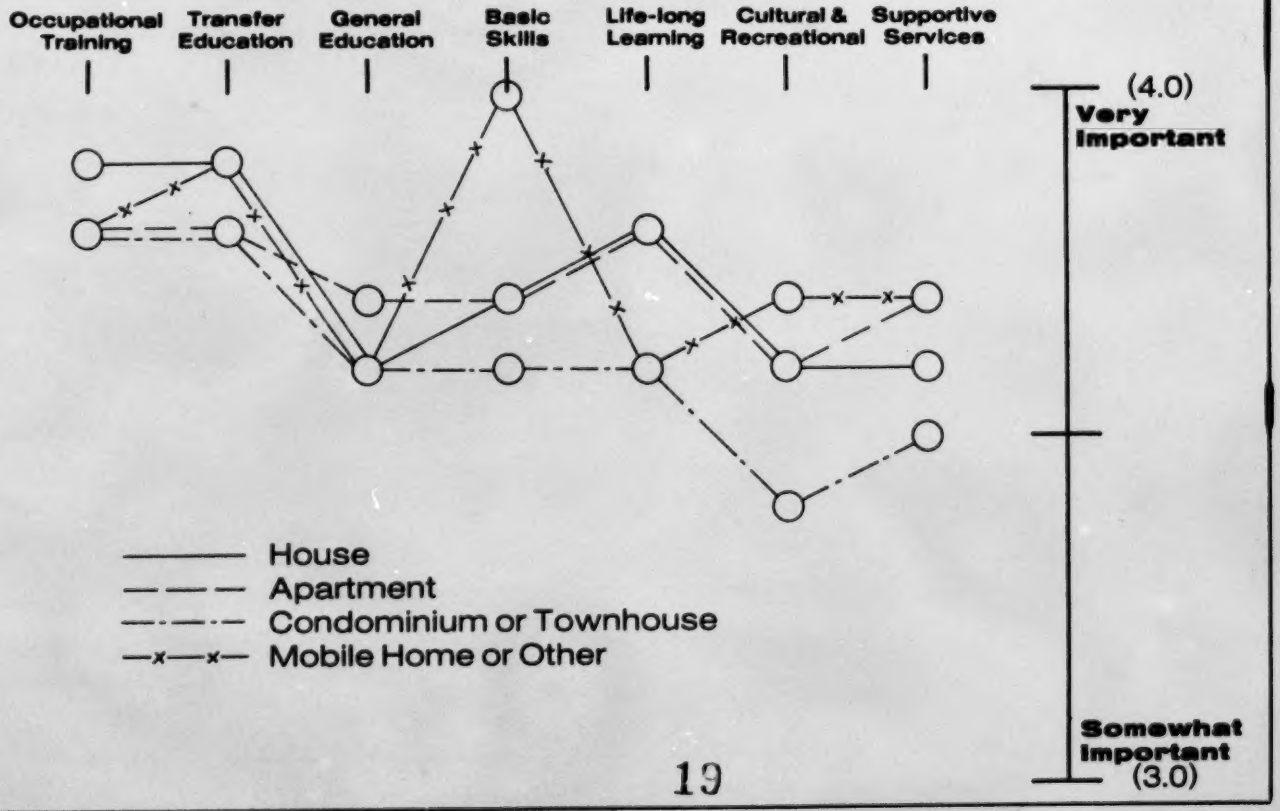
Figure 5
Type of Residence
Personal Perspective



Residence - Social

On the social dimension there was near consensus among all groups for Occupational Training, Transfer Education, and General Education. Basic Skills was given the highest possible rating by people living in mobile homes, while the other groups rated Basic Skills below Occupational Training and Transfer Education. The condominium group gave a much lower rating for Cultural & Recreational and were joined by those living in mobile homes in a lower rating for Life-long Learning. There was a certain amount of disagreement on the importance of Supportive Services.

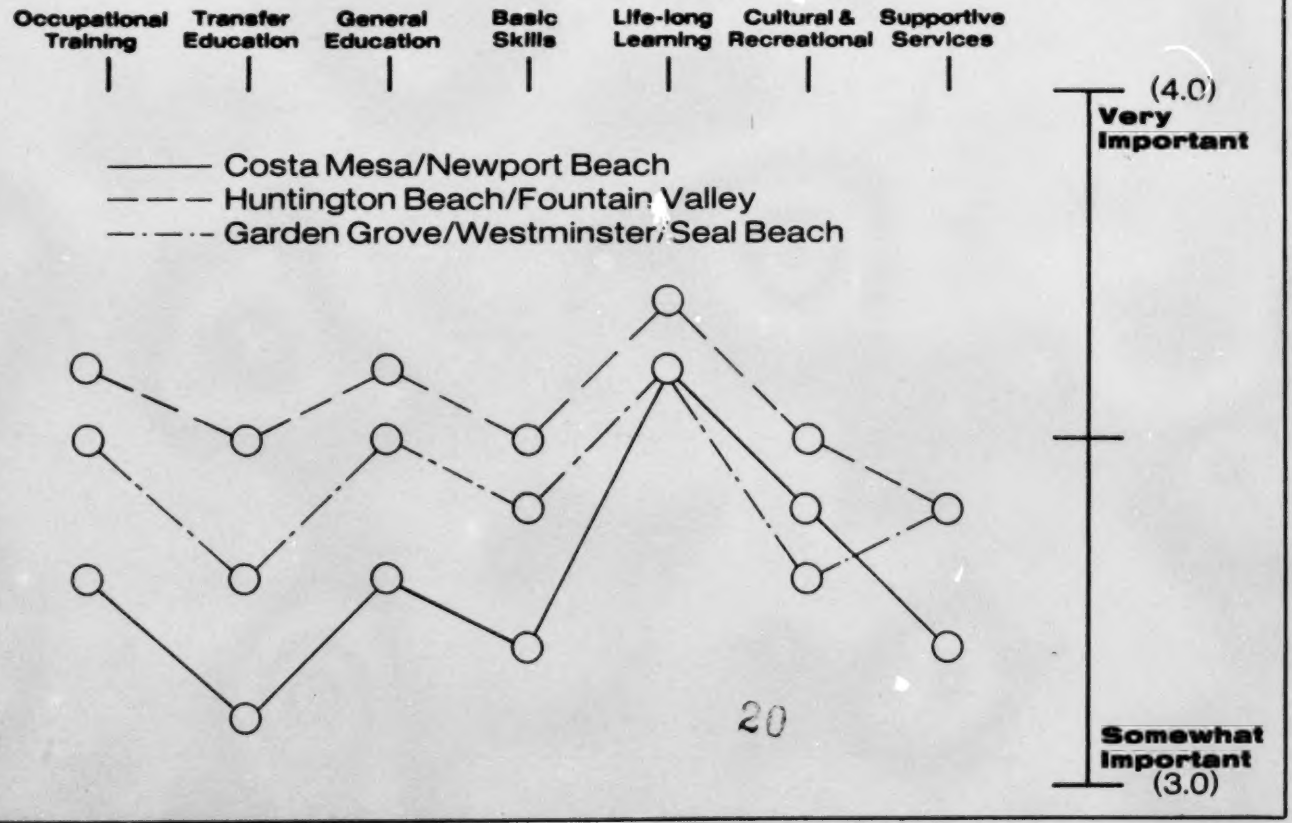
Figure 6
Type of Residence
Social Perspective



Geo-Personal

With the exception of Life-long Learning, there was a substantial disagreement across the geographic areas on the importance of the missions. People in the Huntington Beach/Fountain Valley area reported the highest values for all of the missions while people in the Costa Mesa/ Newport Beach area generally provided the lowest ratings. There was consensus on the high value for Life-long Learning. The Garden Grove/ Westminster/Seal Beach people were the only group to rate Supportive Services higher than Cultural & Recreational on the personal perspective.

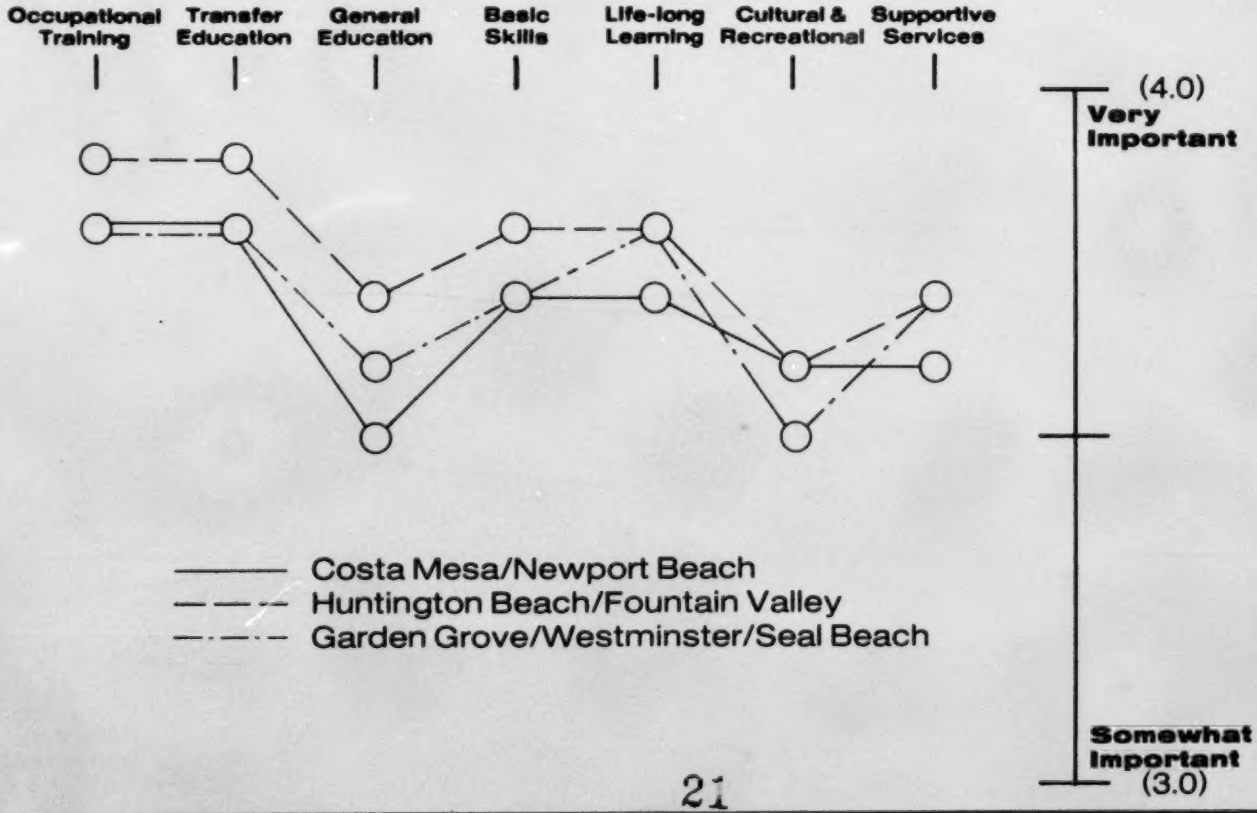
Figure 7
Geographic Area
Personal Perspective



Geo-Social

On the social perspective there was nearly consensus across the geographic areas. The relative positions of General Education and Life-long Learning were lower than on the personal perspective, while the relative positions of Transfer Education, Basic Skills, and Supportive Services increased.

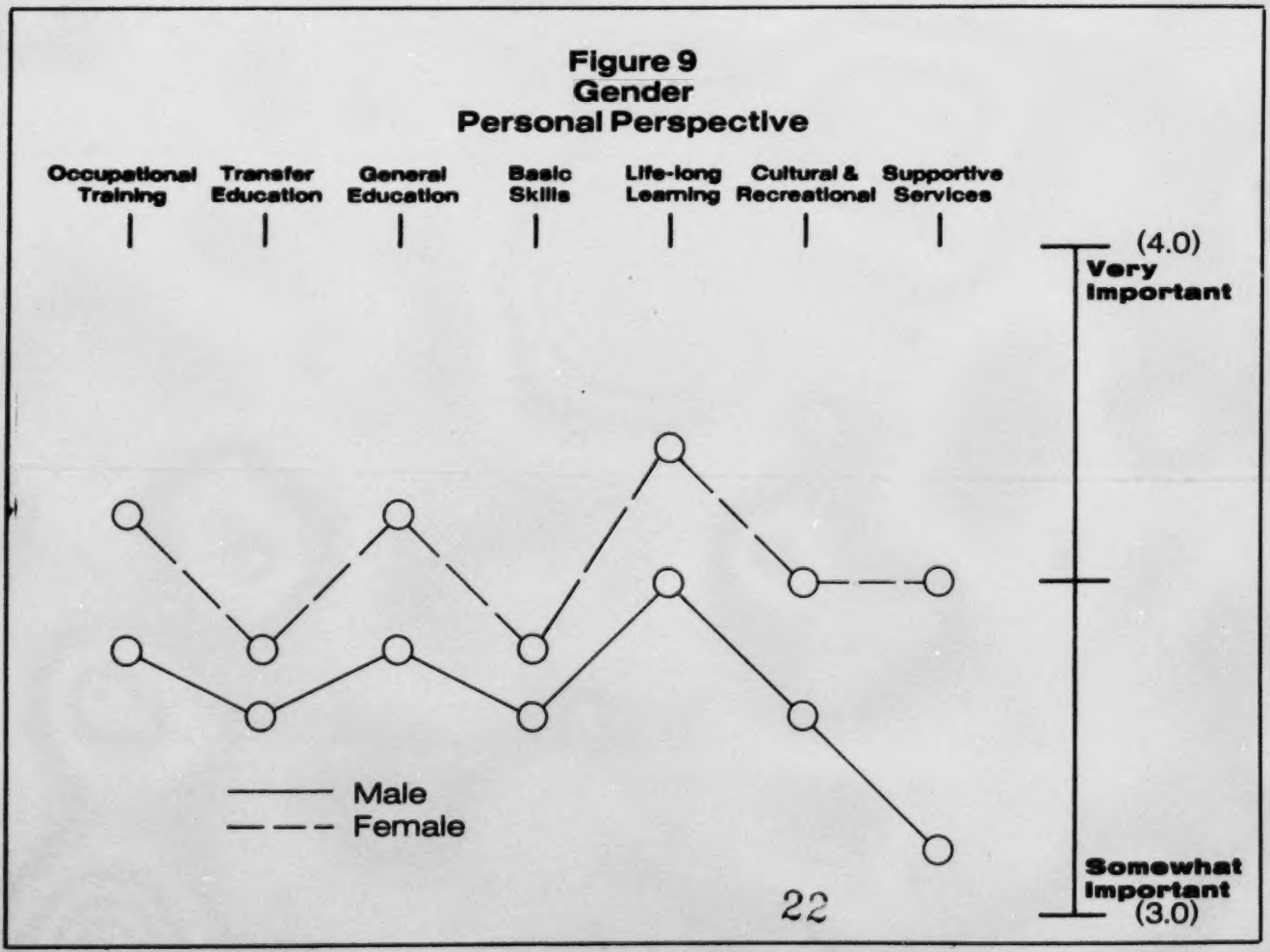
Figure 8
Geographic Area
Social Perspective



Gender - Personal

On the personal perspective, females provided substantially higher ratings than did males for most of the missions. There was consensus on Transfer Education and Basic Skills even though the female respondents gave them both lower relative ratings. The greatest area of disagreement was Supportive Services which the females rated as more important than Transfer Education or Basic Skills and which the males rated much less important.

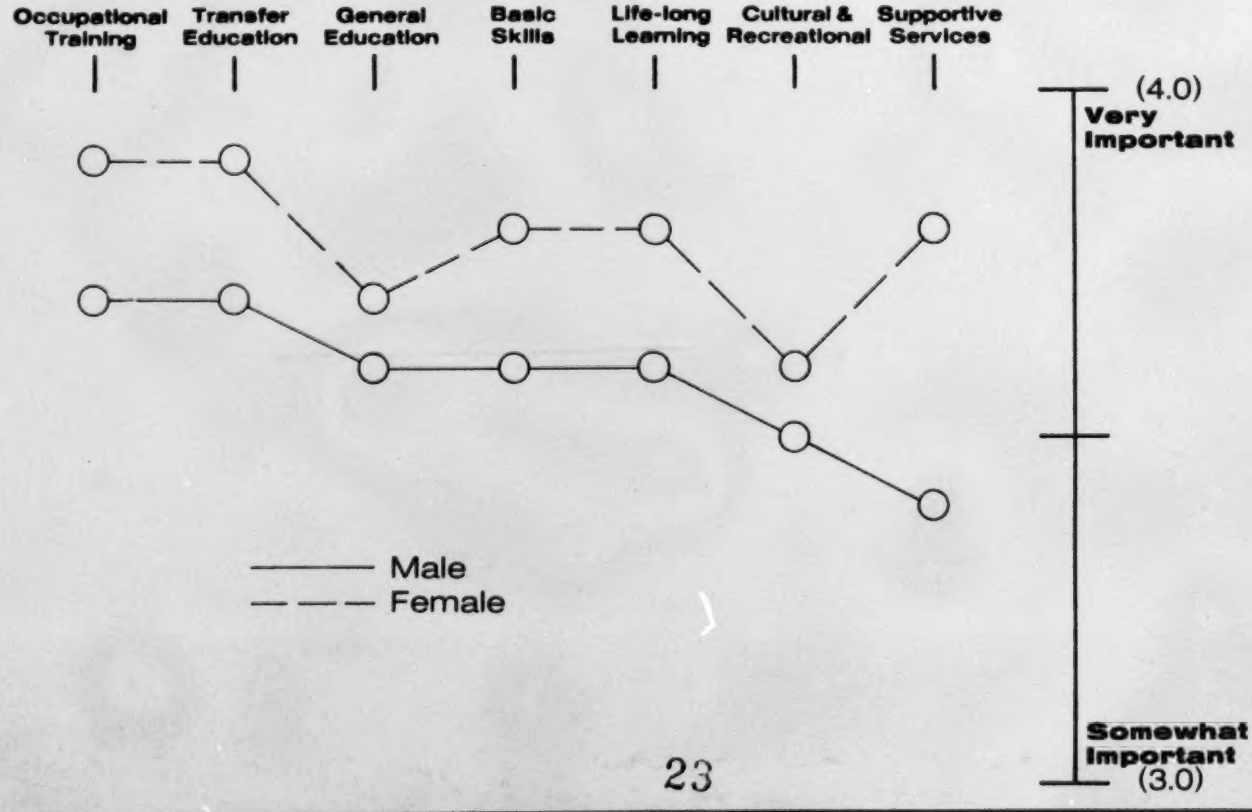
Figure 9
Gender
Personal Perspective



Gender - Social

There was still disagreement between males and females on the social value of the missions. Here we see near consensus on General Education and Cultural & Recreational, while the other missions were rated higher by the female respondents. As on the personal perspective, there was an extremely sharp disagreement between males and females on the value of Supportive Services.

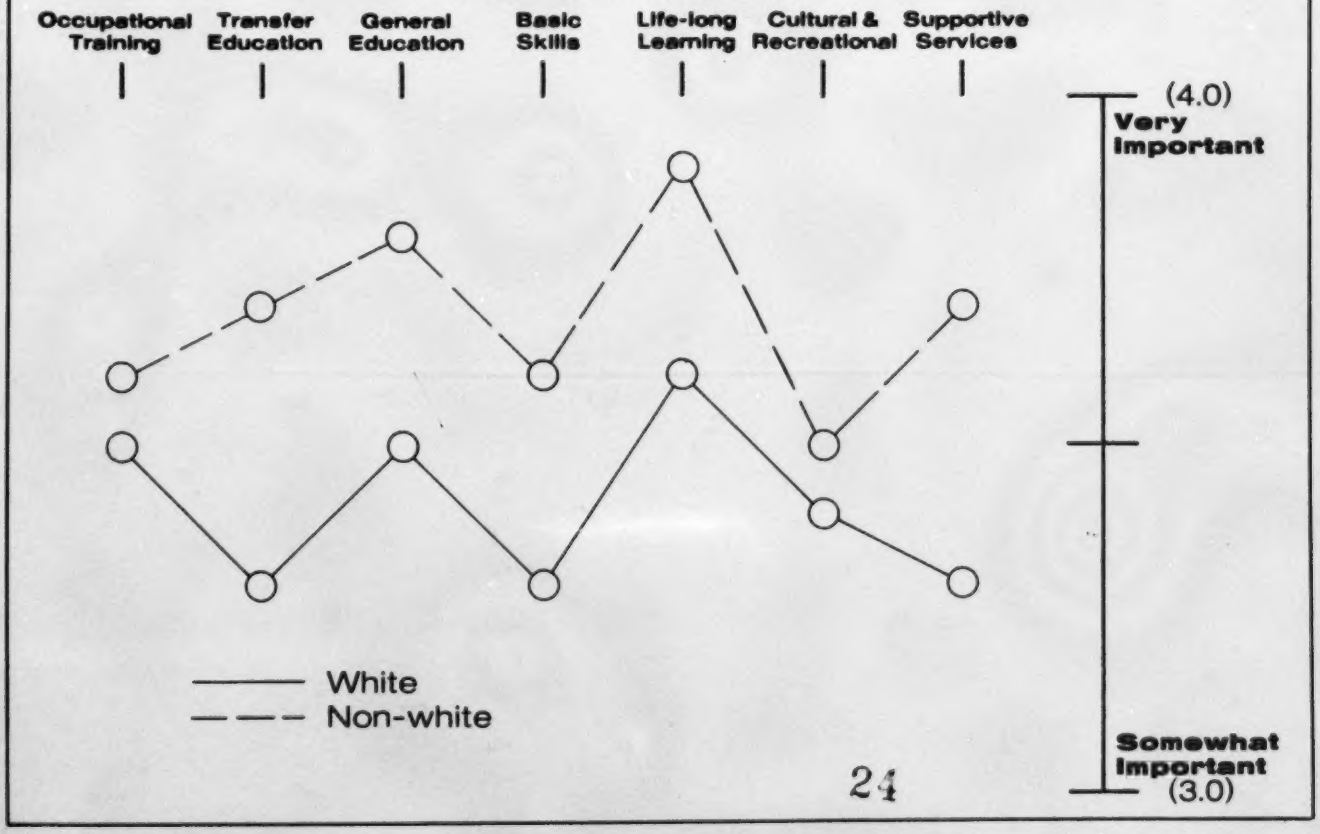
Figure 10
Gender
Social Perspective



Ethnic - Personal

There was considerable disagreement between whites and non-whites on the personal perspective. Non-whites generally gave higher importance ratings than whites for all of the missions. Non-whites gave higher relative ratings for Transfer Education and Supportive Services while placing less relative importance on Occupational Training and Cultural & Recreational.

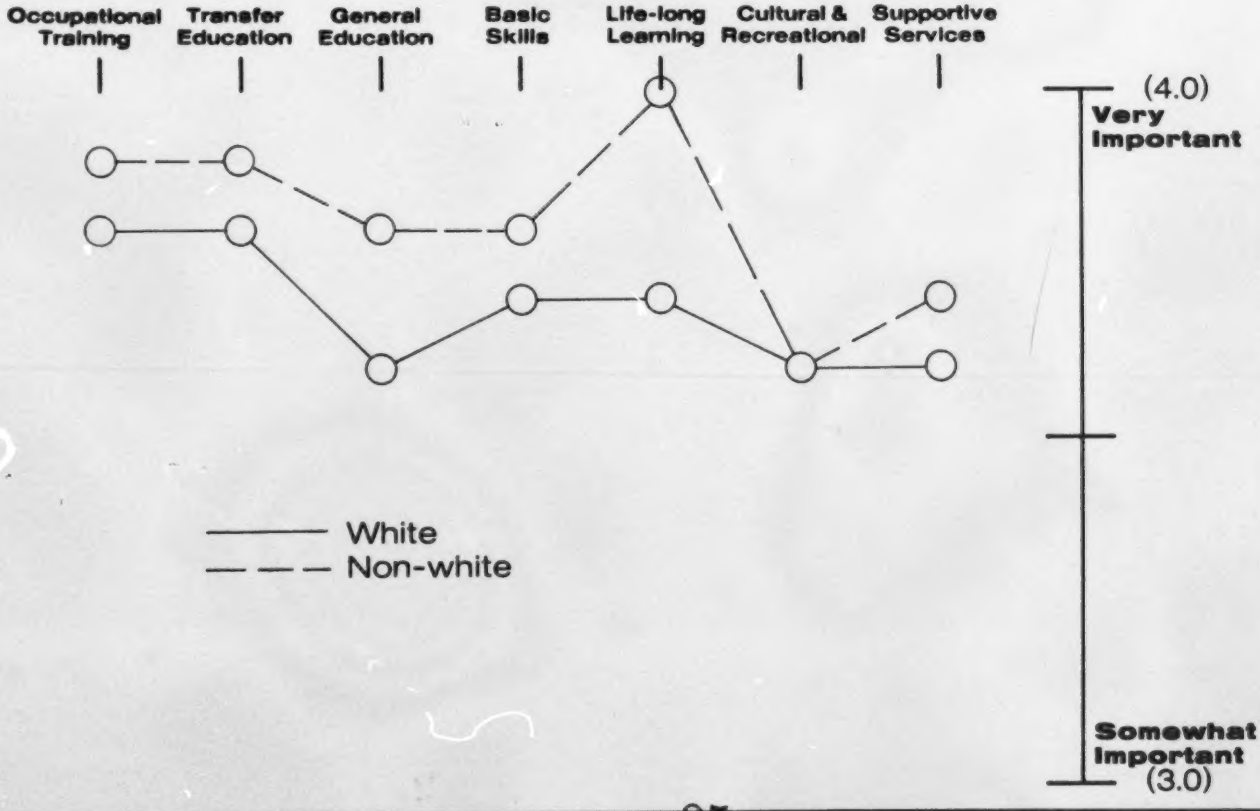
Figure 11
Ethnicity
Personal Perspective



Ethnic - Social

There was near consensus on the social dimension for all ot the missions except General Education and Life-long Learning. White respondents placed less relative emphasis on General Education while non-whites placed considerably more relative emphasis on Life-long Learning. It is interesting to note that the sharp disagreement about Supportive Services which was manifest on the personal perspective all but disappears on the social perspective.

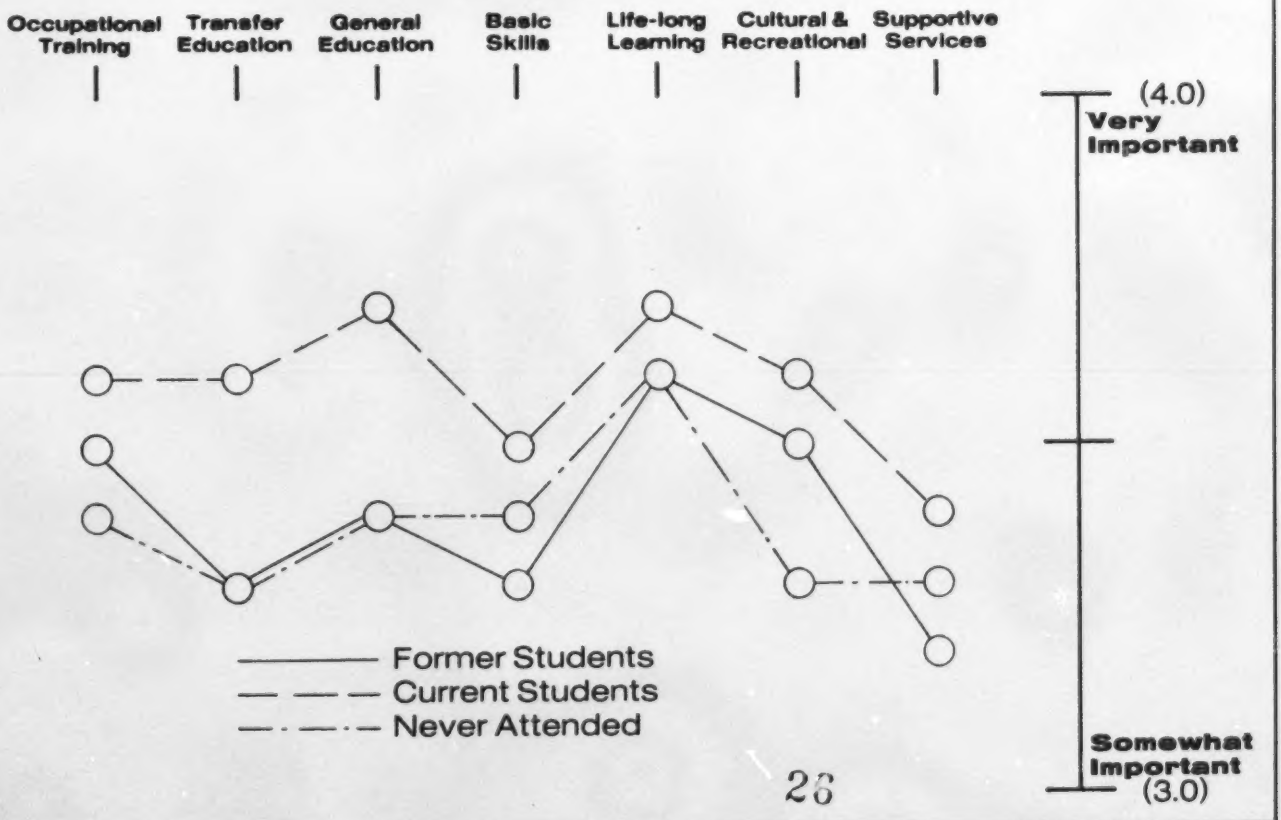
Figure 12
Ethnicity
Social Perspective



Coast Student Status - Personal

The current students provided the highest ratings for all of the missions on the personal dimension. Particularly notable were the much higher ratings for Transfer Education and General Education. There was general consensus between the former students and those respondents who had never attended one the of Coast colleges, except for the Cultural & Recreational mission. Those who had never attended rated Cultural & Recreational much lower than did either the current or former students.

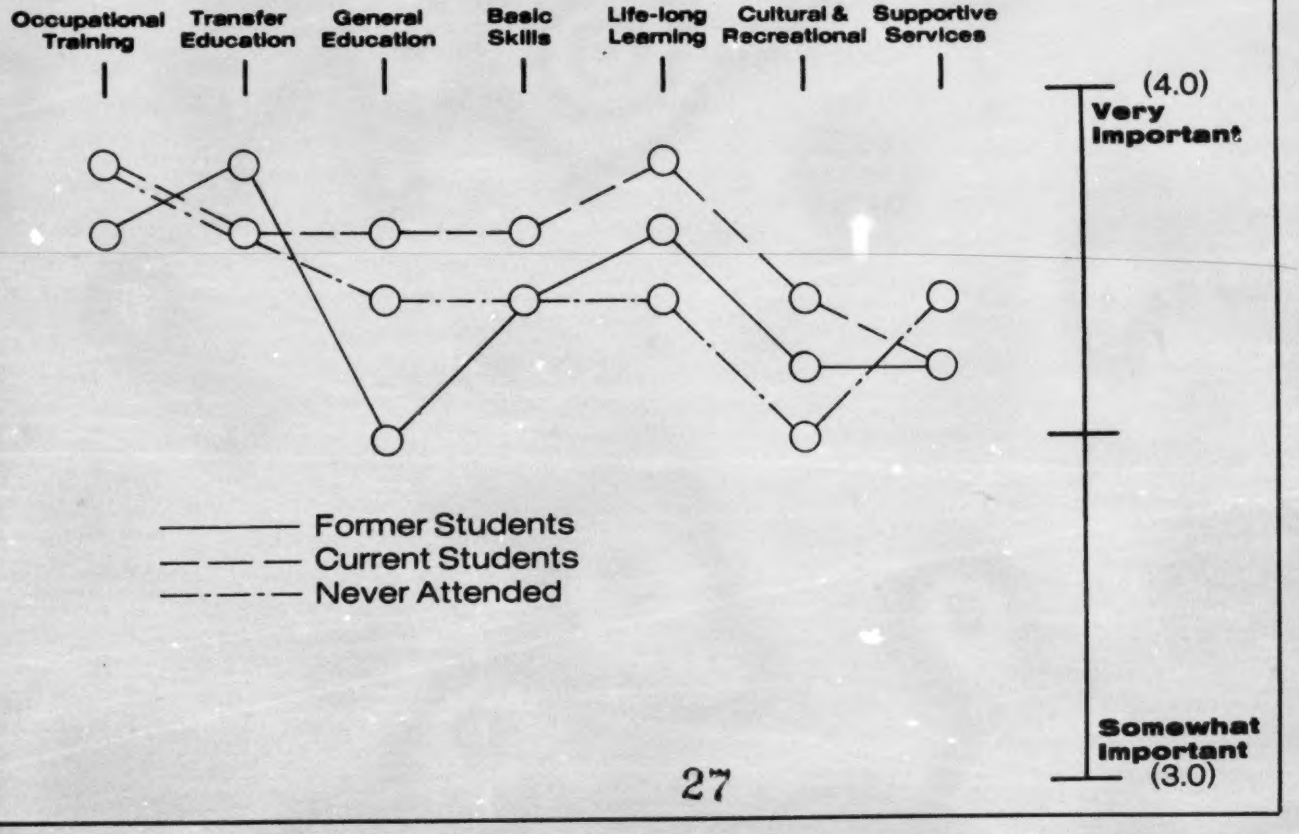
Figure 13
Coast Student Status
Personal Perspective



Coast Student Status - Social

On the social dimension the greatest area of disagreement was General Education. Former students gave General Education a much lower relative rating then the other two groups. There was some lack of consensus on the Life-long Learning and Cultural & Recreational missions. It is interesting to note that those respondents who had never attended one of the Coast colleges gave a higher relative rating to Supportive Services.

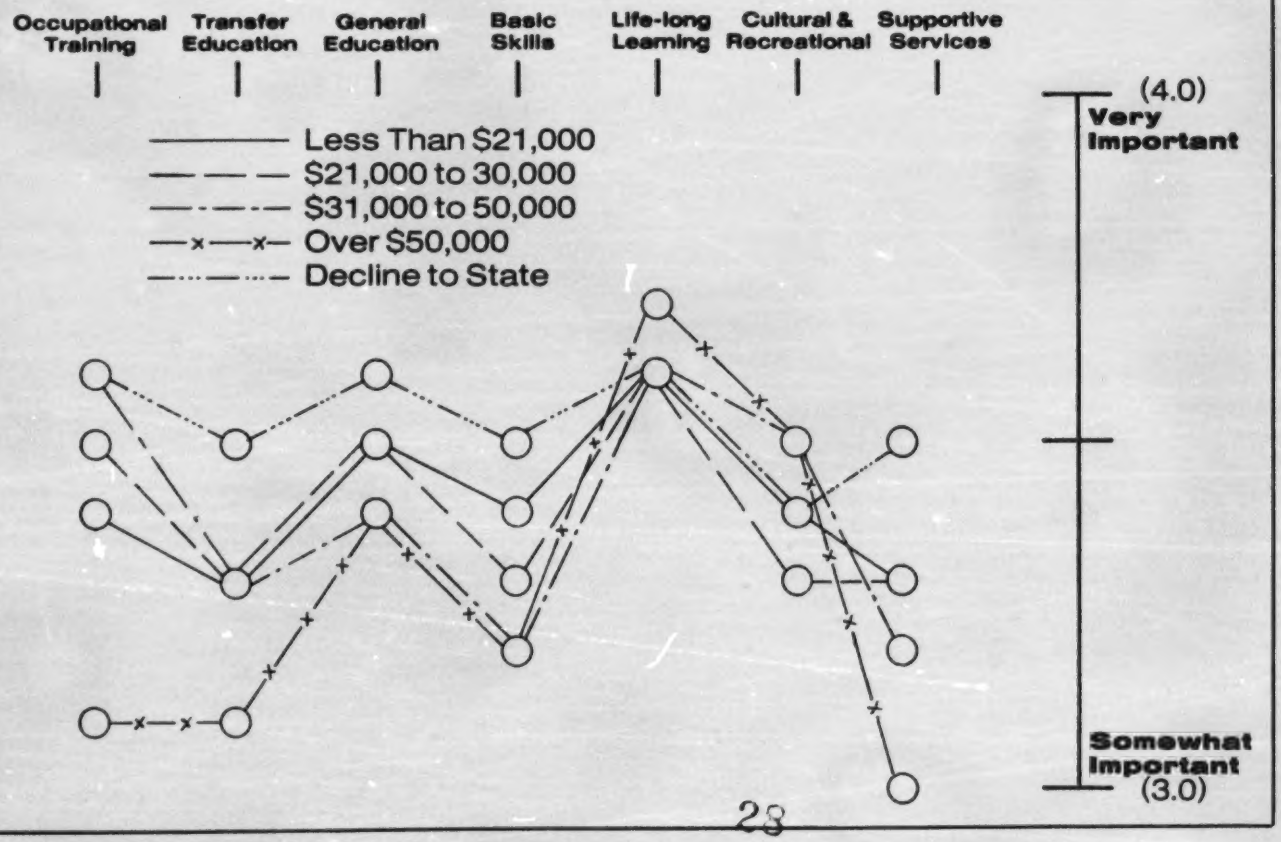
Figure 14
Coast Student Status
Social Perspective



Income Level - Personal

On the personal dimension there was considerable disagreement by income level. The only area where all income groups agreed was on a high level of importance for Life-long Learning. Generally, the "decline to state" group awarded the highest ratings to most of the missions. With the exception of Life-long Learning and Cultural & Recreational, the highest-level income group provided the lowest importance ratings. In the areas of Basic Skills and Supportive Services the importance rating appears to be inversely related to the respondent's level of income.

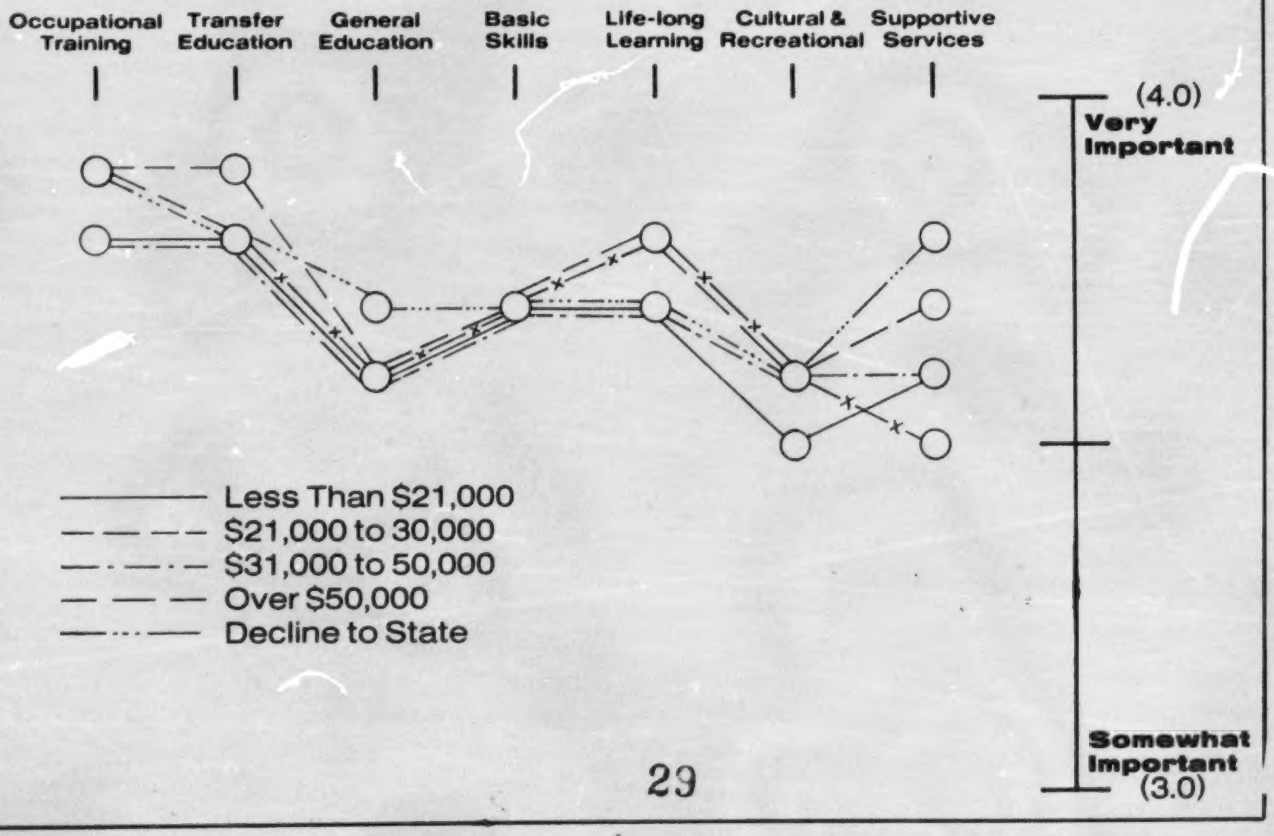
Figure 15
Income Level
Personal Perspective



Income Level - Social

The various income groups were nearly in total agreement on the social importance of the missions with the exception of Supportive Services. As on the personal dimension, the "decline to state" group gave the highest importance rating for Supportive Services while the highest-level income group provided the lowest rating.

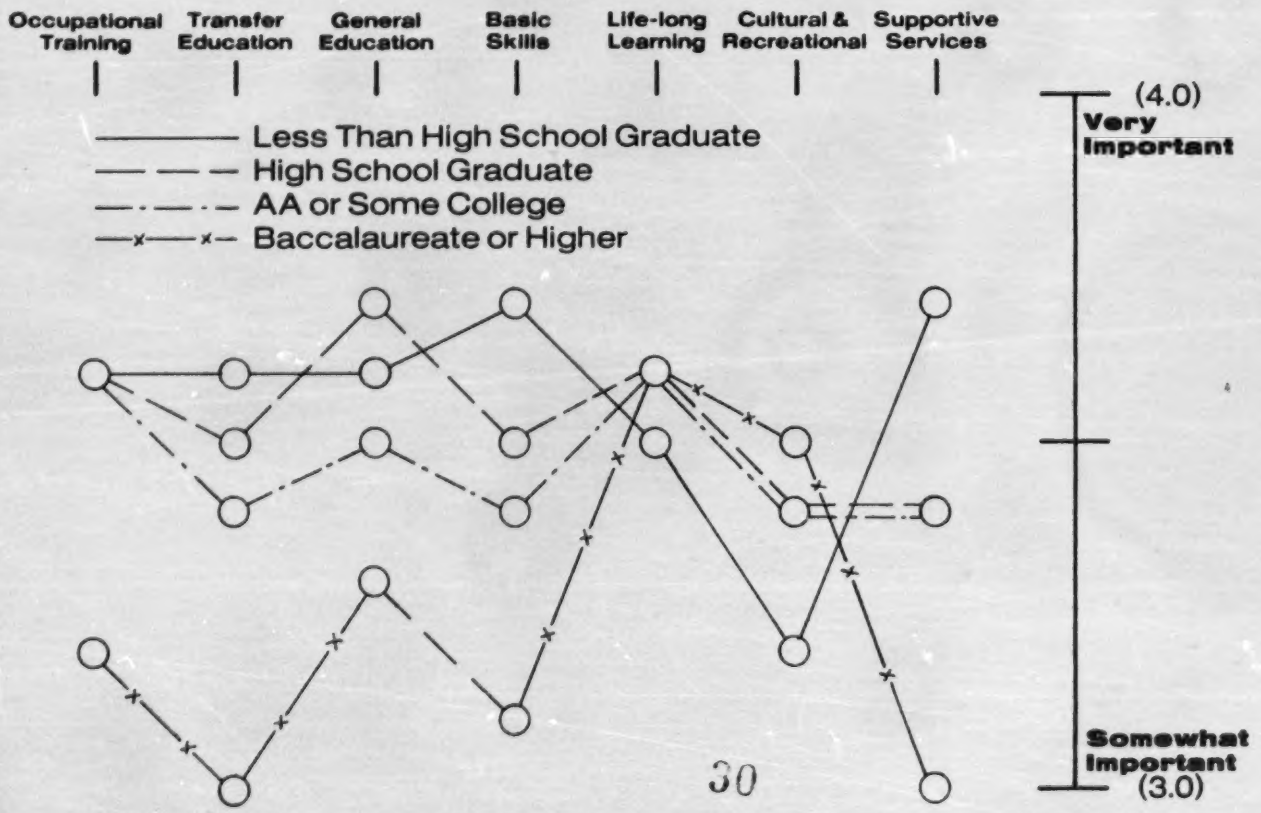
Figure 16
Income Level
Social Perspective



Education Level - Personal

Respondents with education levels below high school graduation provided an interesting set of performance ratings. They rated Occupational Training, Transfer Education, and General Education all at the same high level and rated Basic Skills as even more important than those three. They were also the only group to rate Life-long Learning and Cultural & Recreational as substantially less important than Basic Skills; and they also provided the highest rating for Supportive Services. Those people with a baccalaureate differed from the other groups by providing substantially lower ratings for all the missions except Life-long Learning and Cultural & Recreational.

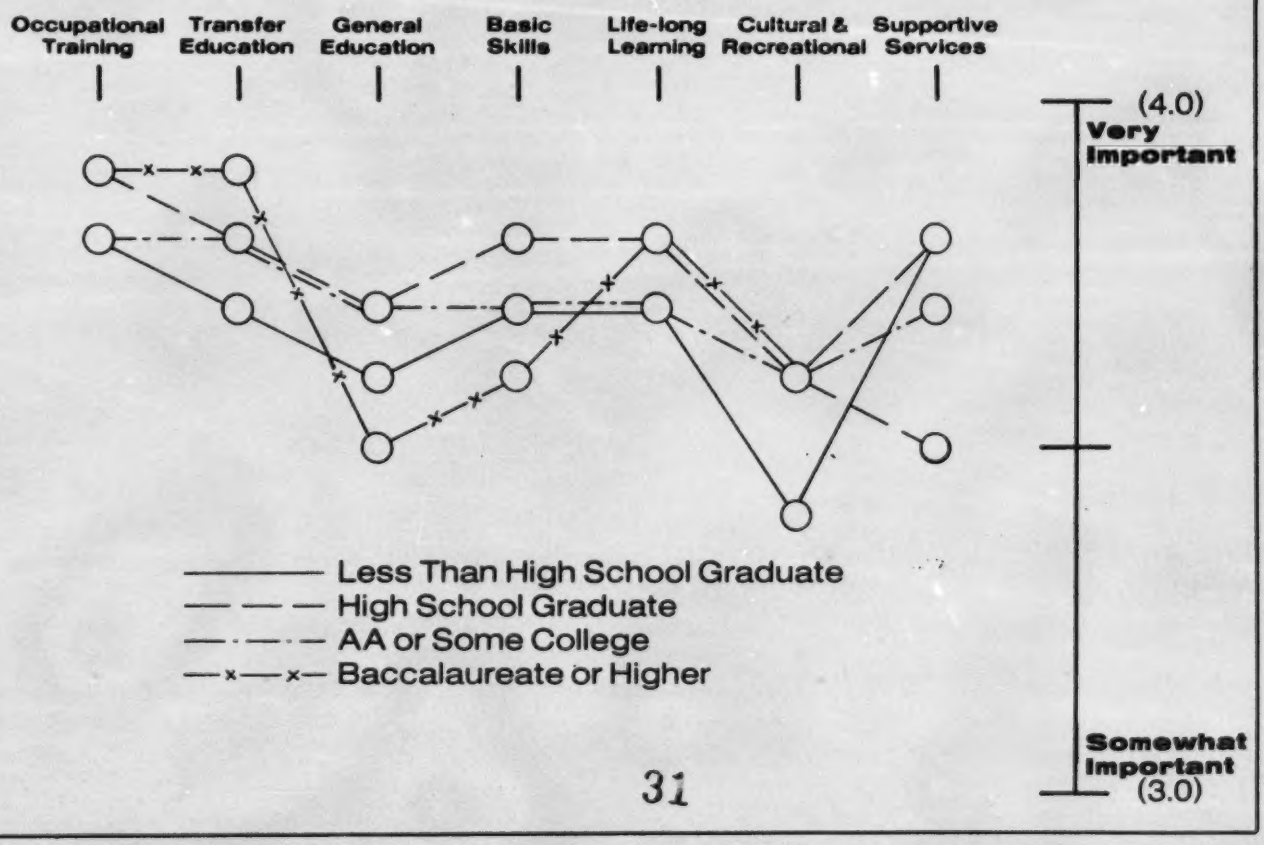
Figure 17
Education Level
Personal Perspective



Education Level - Social

On the social dimension, the baccalaureate group provided the highest rating for Transfer Education and the lowest ratings for General Education, Basic Skills, and Supportive Services. The "less than high school" group again provided a relatively low rating for Cultural & Recreational. There was a general agreement among the groups that General Education and Cultural & Recreational were less important than the other missions.

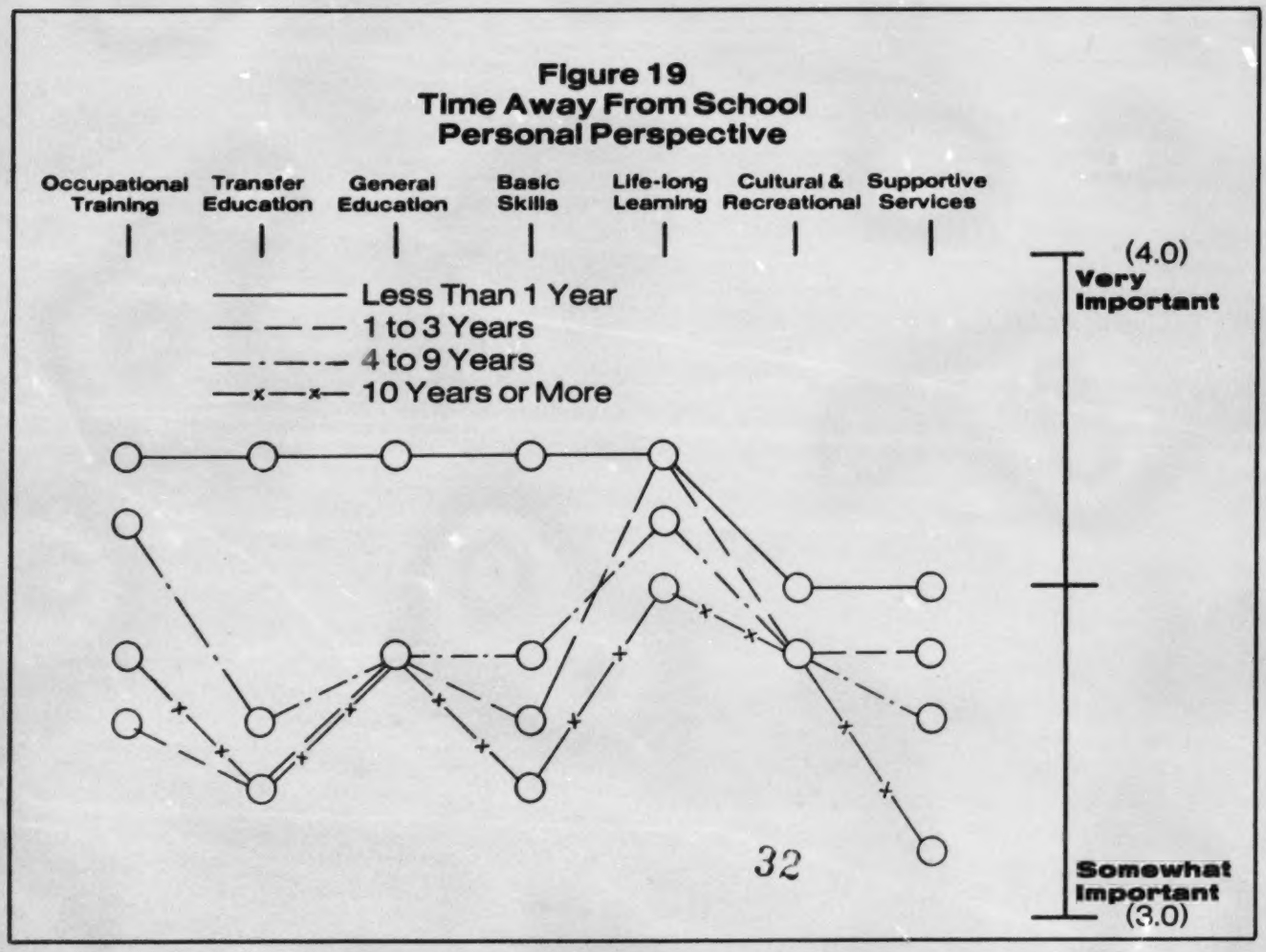
Figure 18
Education Level
Social Perspective



Time Away From School - Personal

Those respondents who were still in school or had been away less than one year exhibited a very different pattern of importance ratings. They rated Occupational Training, Transfer Education, General Education, Basic Skills, and Life-long Learning all on the same high level. There was considerable disagreement by time away from school on the importance of Occupational Training and Supportive Services. With the exception of Occupational Training, those respondents who had been away from school for ten years or more provided the lowest ratings for all the mission areas.

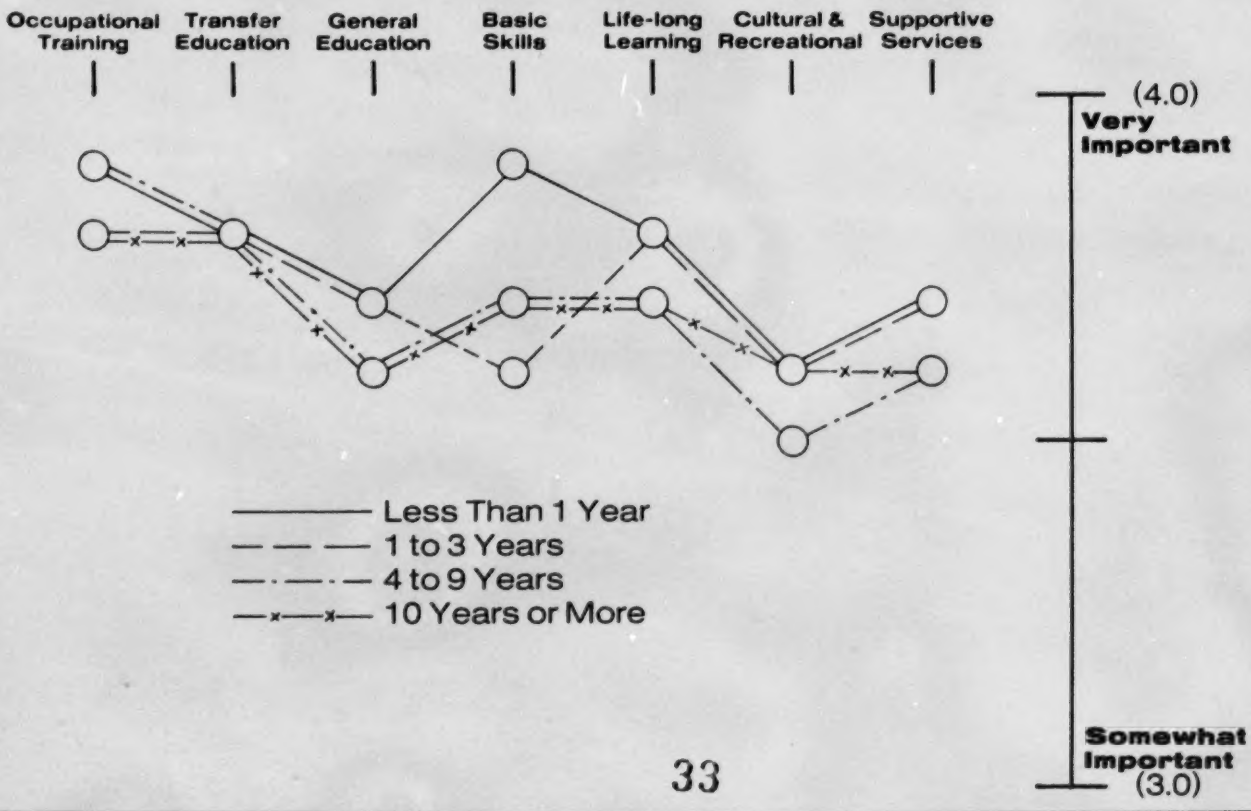
Figure 19
Time Away From School
Personal Perspective



Time Away From School - Social

There was general consensus on the social importance ratings, with the exception of Basic Skills. Those respondents still in school or less than one year away from school rated Basic Skills as far more important than all the other people did. There was general consensus that Occupational Training and Transfer Education were the most important missions.

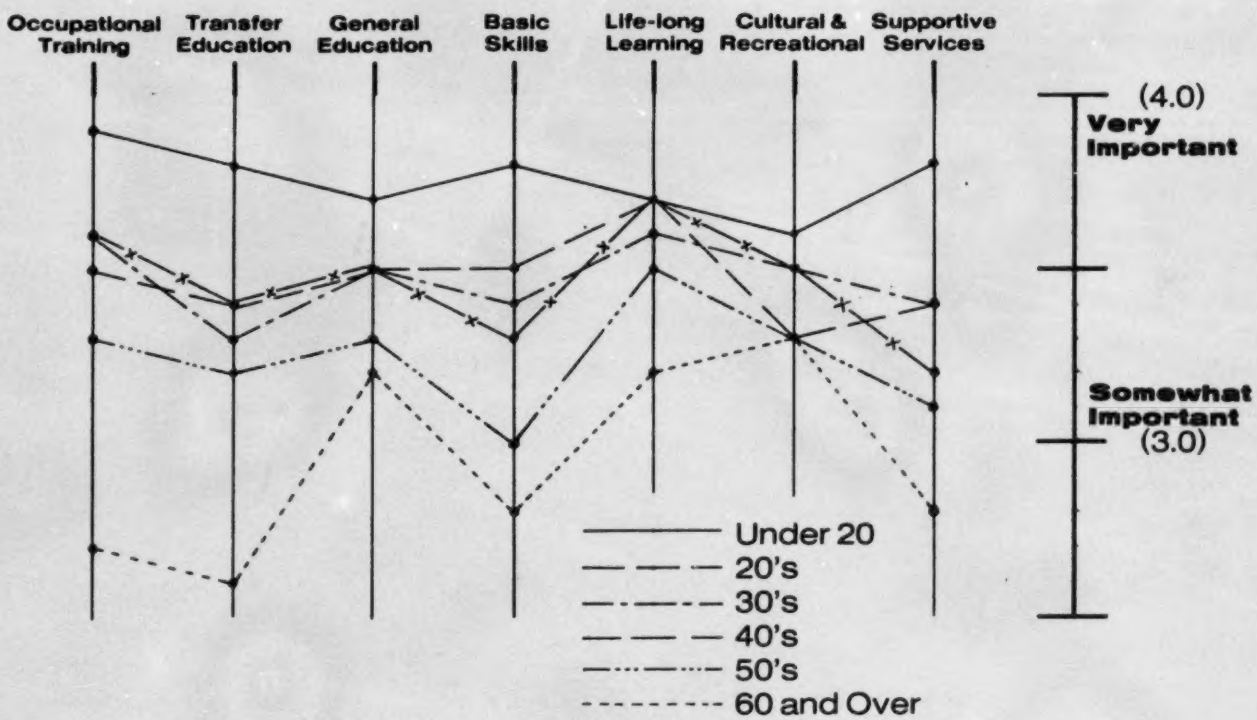
Figure 20
Time Away From School
Social Perspective



Age Group - Personal

There was considerable variation across the age groups for all of the missions on the personal dimension. Immediately noticeable is the fact that the very highest rating for each of the seven missions came from the very youngest age group, while the lowest ratings came from the two most senior age groups. Particularly interesting are the Basic Skills mission and the Supportive Services mission. The perceived importance for these two missions was inversely related to age.

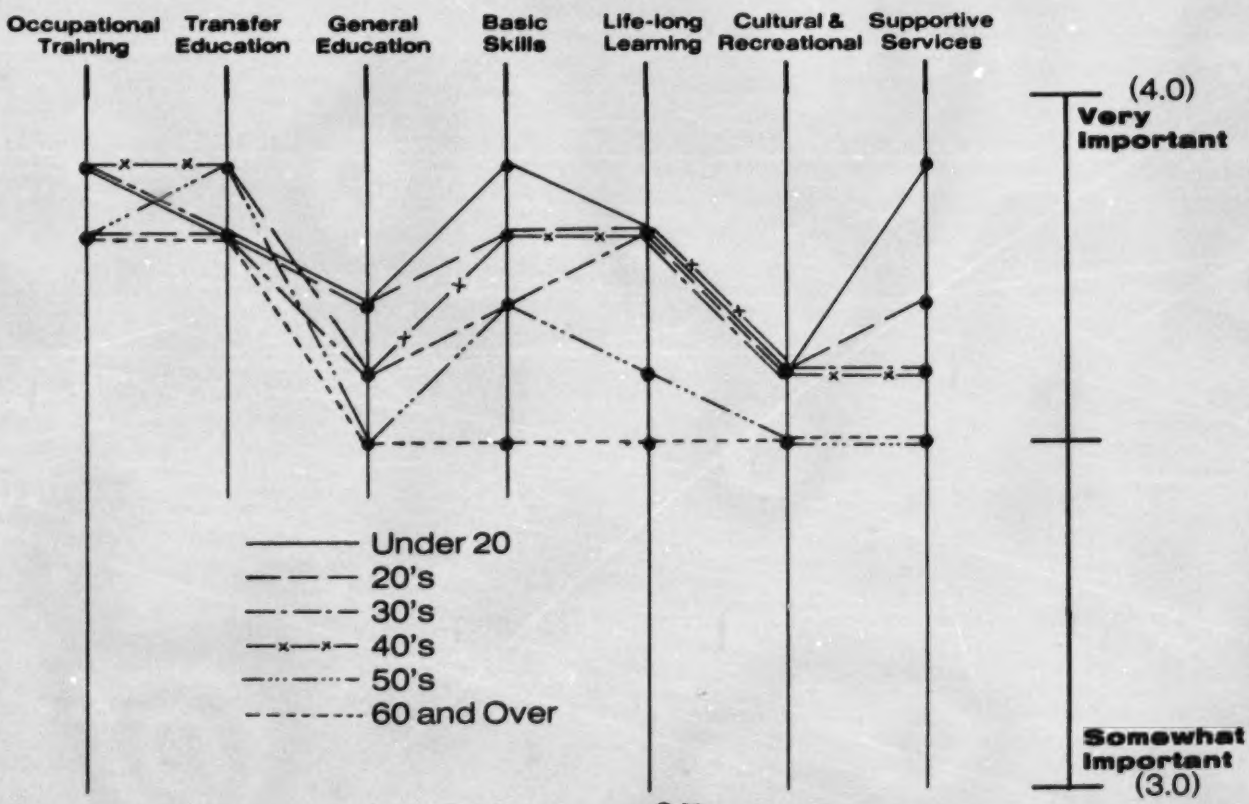
Figure 21
Age Group
Personal Perspective



Age Group - Social

There was considerably greater consensus across the age groups on the social importance of the seven missions. However, Basic Skills and Supportive Services were still areas of considerable disagreement. The two most senior groups also differed from the others by giving a substantially lower rating for Life-long Learning.

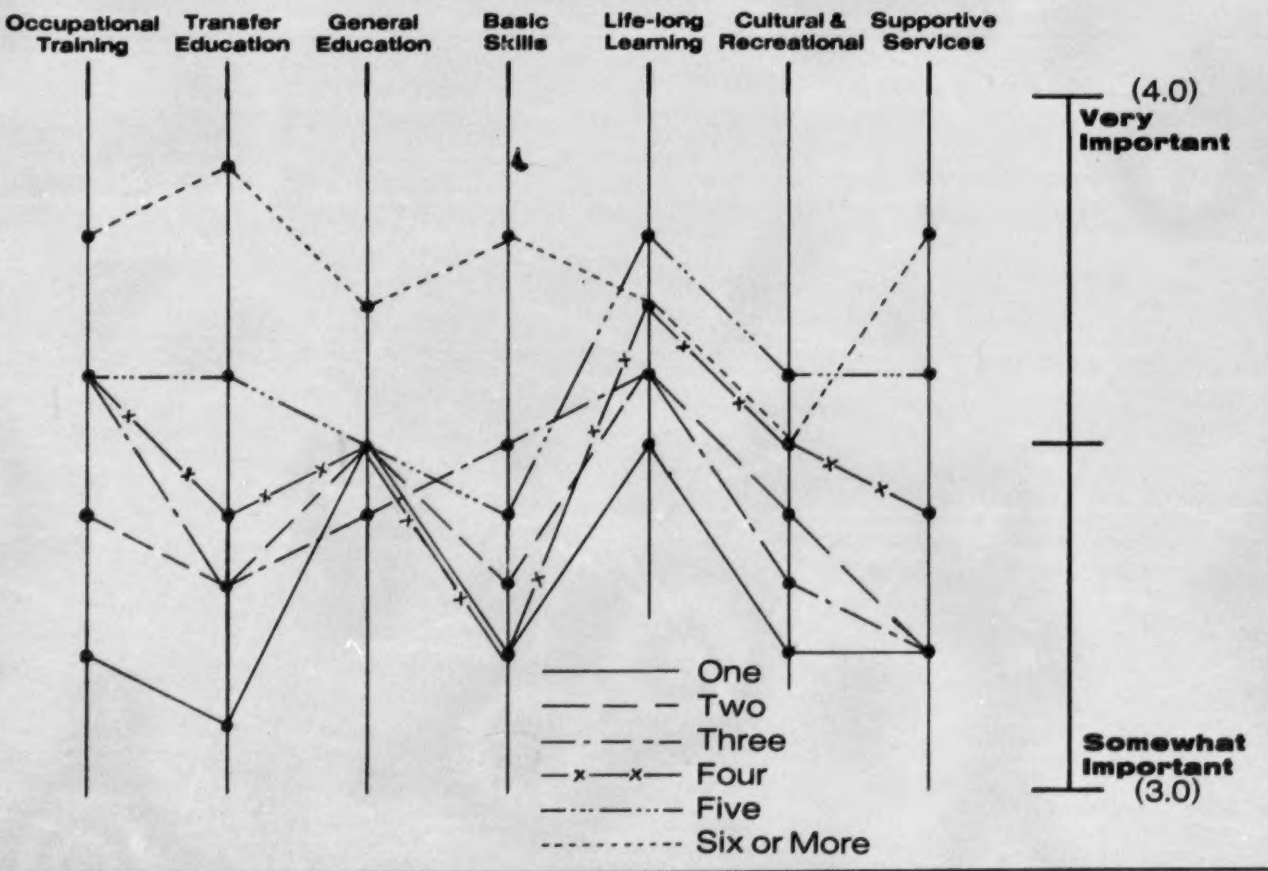
Figure 22
Age Group
Social Perspective



Number in Household - Personal

Respondents from the smaller households generally considered all of the missions to be less important than did those respondents from households with four or more people. With the exception of Life-long Learning and Cultural & Recreational, the respondents from households consisting of six or more people provided extremely high ratings for the missions. It is interesting to note that all groups except those from the very largest households considered Life-long Learning to be more important than the Basic Skills, Cultural & Recreational and Supportive Services missions.

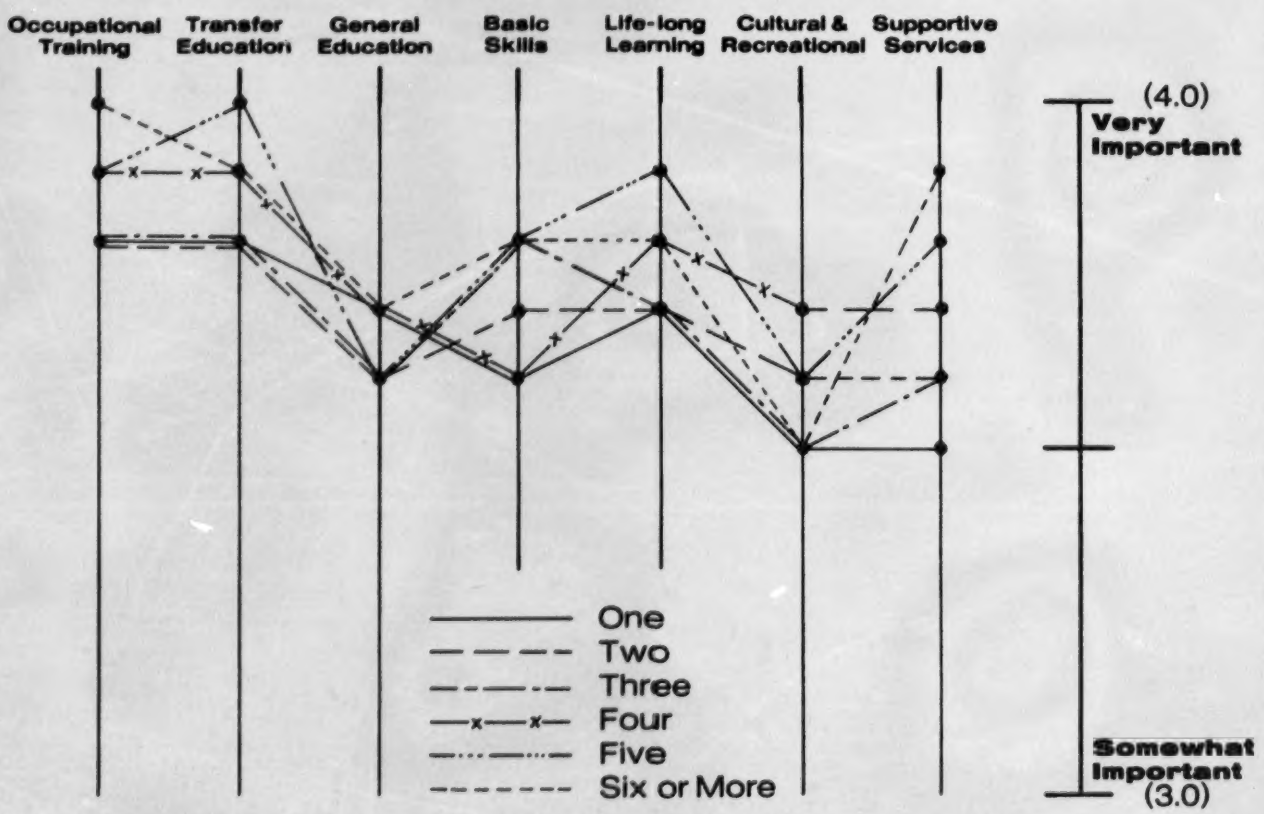
Figure 23
Number of People in Household
Personal Perspective



Number in Household - Social

There was considerably greater consensus on the social dimension with the only major area of disagreement being Supportive Services. Supportive Services were seen to be of substantially greater importance by those from the largest households.

Figure 24
Number of People in Household
Social Perspective



IN SUMMARY

The findings from this study have demonstrated that the question of the value which the general public places on the community college missions is a far more complex one than has been considered before. We have learned that people view the various functions of the community college from both a personal perspective and a social perspective. We have learned that judgments about the importance of the various missions differ, depending upon which context is used as a frame of reference. These findings raise an important public policy question: When people vote on such matters as support of public functions, do they make their choices on the basis of their own personal needs or on the basis of what they perceive as the greatest social good?

The answer to that question could be the topic of a considerable amount of future research. In all likelihood, the answer to that question would take the form of a complex relationship that varies from issue to issue. On the basis of the findings from this study, it would seem that the residents of the Coast Community District would be generally more supportive of the community college functions if they could be persuaded to view them in a social context. On the other hand, we have seen that the priorities that would be established on the basis of social importance are rather different than those which would emerge from a standpoint of personal preference.

One of the most gratifying aspects of these findings was that the residents of the Coast Community College District gave significantly higher importance ratings to all seven of the community college missions than did the statewide sample of California residents. This is undoubtedly due, at least in part, to the very high degree of involvement that residents of our community have had with our colleges. The fact that nearly half the adult population living in the Coast District has had some kind of educational experience with one or more of our three colleges was well documented in earlier reports from this project. The obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that participation and familiarity with the community college serves to enhance the public's perception of the value of the functions of the community college. It is this special combination of functions or missions that makes the community college unique among all the other institutions of higher education. If the community colleges are to survive the 1980's with their unique combination of purposes intact as well as publicly supported, they must find ways to increase the general public's awareness of those purposes and appreciation of their value to society.

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